UNITED
NATIONS

EP

Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.19/2/Add.1
17 December 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Nineteenth session
Nairobi, 27 January - 7 February 1997
Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

POLICY ISSUES: COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Issues arising from the resolutions of the General Assembly as its fiftieth and fifty-first sessions, specifically calling for action by the United Nations Environment Programme

Addendum to the report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report constitutes an addendum to the report by the Executive Director contained in document UNEP/GC.19/2 and provides information on issues arising from the resolutions of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly which are of relevance to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

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ISSUES ARISING FROM THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FIFTY-FIRST SESSION WHICH ARE OF RELEVANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

1. In its resolution 51/ ..., entitled "Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21" the General Assembly decided to convene the special session for a duration of one week from 23 to 27 June 1997, at the highest possible political level. It decided also that the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its fifth session as well as the Commission's ad-hoc open-ended inter-sessional Working Group would be devoted to preparations for the session. The Assembly stressed also that there should be no attempt to renegotiate Agenda 21 or any other internationally recognized intergovernmental agreements in the field of environment and sustainable development and that discussions should focus on the fulfilment of commitments and the further implementation of Agenda 21 and related outcomes of Conferences held since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The General Assembly requested the Secretariat to provide all relevant reports called for in General Assembly resolution 50/113, preferably not later than 15 January 1997.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly invited the UNEP Governing Council to include in its report to the General Assembly at its special session information and views on ways to address, in a forward-looking manner, national, regional and international applications of principles contained in the Rio Declaration and the implementation of Agenda 21 in the interrelated issues of environment and development.

3. The Assembly also requested that other contributions to the special session, in addition to those identified in its resolution 50/113, include submissions from relevant bodies and organizations of the United Nations, including the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) of CSD and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), information on the outcomes of the post-UNCED United Nations conferences such as the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, regional and subregional conferences, summits and other inter-sessional meetings on sustainable development organized by countries, and information on the activities of relevant United Nations conventions on environment and development and the global freshwater assessment, and that account be taken of the activities organized by major groups, including business and industry and non-governmental organizations.

4. As indicated in the report of the Executive Director (UNEP/GC.19/2) to which the present document constitutes an addendum, UNEP, in its capacity of task manager in a number of areas of Agenda 21, has already submitted relevant reports to the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. By the required deadline UNEP will also have completed its report on the application of the Rio Declaration principles as requested by the Assembly.

5. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities", the text of which was prepared by CSD and subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the General Assembly endorsed the Washington Declaration and the

Global Programme of Action on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, and also considered the proposal of UNEP on institutional arrangements and implementation of the Global Programme of Action with the relevant recommendations of the CSD.

6. The resolution stressed the need for States to take action for the formal endorsement by each competent international organization of those parts of the Global Programme of Action that are relevant to their mandates and to accord appropriate priority to its implementation in the work programme of each organization. It stressed the need for States to take such action at the next meeting of the governing bodies of those organizations, including the UNEP Governing Council. The General Assembly also called upon UNEP to take expeditious action, within its available resources and with the aid of voluntary contributions, to provide for the establishment and implementation of the clearing-house mechanism referred to in the Global Programme of Action, and requested the Executive Director of UNEP to prepare and submit to the Governing Council at its nineteenth session specific proposals on that clearing-house. Those proposals are before the Council in document UNEP/GC.19/25.

7. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa", the General Assembly welcomed the fact that the Convention would enter into force on 26 December 1996 and called upon more countries to take appropriate action for the ratification, acceptance or approval of, accession to the Convention. It also decided that the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention should be held from 29 September to 10 October 1997 in Rome. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, subject to the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its first session, to consider maintaining current administrative and financial arrangements to support the Convention beyond the first session of the Conference of the Parties until the permanent secretariat designated by the Conference of the Parties begins operating, which should not be later than 31 December 1998.

8. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Convention on Biological Diversity" the General Assembly welcomed the results of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Jakarta from 6 to 17 November 1995 and encouraged States that had not yet ratified the Convention to do so. In addition, it invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention to provide information on the experience gained under the Convention to the special session of the General Assembly as well as welcomed the work being carried out to enhance cooperation with CSD.

9. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Protection of the global climate for present and future generations of mankind", the General Assembly considered a number of transitional administrative arrangements regarding personnel and financial matters of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for the biennium 1996-1997. It took note with appreciation of the scientific contributions to the convention process of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNEP and also took note of its second assessment report, as the most comprehensive assessment available to date of the issues related to global climate change.

10. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Effects of atomic radiation", the General Assembly, while expressing its concern about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which mankind and the environment are exposed, commended the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) and requested it to continue its work. In that context, the Assembly requested UNEP to continue providing support for the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee and disseminating of its findings to the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public.

11. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "International trade and development", the General Assembly endorsed the outcome of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held at Midrand, South Africa, April/May 1996, and devoted considerable attention to the question of trade and environment. The General Assembly deplored, inter alia, any attempt to bypass or undermine multilaterally agreed procedures on the conduct of international trading by resorting to unilateral actions over and above those agreed in the Uruguay Round and affirmed that environmental and social concerns should not be used for protectionist purposes. It reaffirmed that Governments should ensure that trade and environmental policies were mutually supportive in order to achieve sustainable development and that, in doing so, their environmental policies and measures with a potential trade impact should not be used for protectionist purposes. It recognized the important progress made in various forums in understanding the relationship between trade and environment and requested UNCTAD to continue its work in that area in cooperation with relevant international organizations, including UNEP.

12. In the context of the UNEP programme in the area of trade and environment, the recommendations of the General Assembly are of utmost importance to UNEP undertakings and the concern expressed by the General Assembly about protectionist measures will have to be fully taken into account by UNEP when elaborating its further work programme in that area.

13. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Question of Antarctica", the General Assembly took note of the note of the Secretary-General on the question of Antarctica and the role accorded UNEP by the Secretary-General in the preparation of his report. It also recalled the statement under chapter 17 of Agenda 21 to the effect that States carrying out research activities in Antarctica should ensure that data and information resulting from such research were freely available to the international community and that they should enhance its access to that information. In that context, the General Assembly welcomed the invitation to the Executive Director of UNEP to attend Antarctic Treaty consultative meetings in order to assist such meetings in their substantive work, and urged the parties to continue to do so for future consultative meetings.

14. At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly also adopted resolution 51/..., entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)", in which it endorsed the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda as adopted at the Conference. It called upon all Governments and organizations of the United Nations system to implement fully and effectively the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration. It also requested all the

relevant United Nations organizations and specialized agencies to identify the specific actions that they would undertake, within their mandates, towards the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and to inform the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) of their actions and subsequently to report on them to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council. With regard to the major goal of the Habitat Agenda - namely, achievement of sustainable human settlements - UNEP is furthering its cooperation with Habitat through, inter alia, the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP). This cooperation is outlined in document UNEP/GC.19/8, which is before the Council. UNEP is also continuing the provision of assistance and advice to local communities and authorities through its International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) and its Industry and Environment Office.

15. The General Assembly also adopted resolution 51/..., entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Islands Developing States", in which, inter alia, it requested the Secretary-General, in collaboration with UNCTAD, UNEP and other relevant United Nations and non-United Nations organizations, to prepare a report, based on the views of relevant experts, on a vulnerability index for small island developing States.

16. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction", the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the above subject and underlined the need for the United Nations system to ensure the integration of the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action to the coordinated approach taken to the follow-up to all recent major United Nations conferences and summit meetings and to the implementation of their respective plans of action. The role of UNEP in the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy was outlined in the main body of that report.

17. In its substantive resolution 51/..., entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women", the General Assembly requested all United Nations system organizations to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular by promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective at all levels. The work done thus far by UNEP in this regard is outlined in document UNEP/GC.19/9.

18. In its resolution 51/..., entitled "Mid-term review of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", the General Assembly recognized the complementary role of the United Nations system-wide Special Initiative for Africa in the implementation of the New Agenda and requested all organizations and programmes of the system to take, as a matter of urgency, concrete and effective measures in order to implement fully the recommendations contained in the report of Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, and to do so in a coordinated manner.

19. In addition, the General Assembly adopted three resolutions under the agenda item on law of the sea, which are of relevance to the global environmental agenda. One of these resolutions, 51/..., relates to the

conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks and resolution 51/... relates to large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, unauthorized fishing in zones of national jurisdiction and fisheries by-catch and discards.